

the United States, the government of Prime Minister Viktor Orban has emphasized that it has other foreign policy interests, including building closer relations with Russia. Some analysts assert that the Hungarian government appears to be the most “pro-Russian” government of the NATO and EU countries. Although Hungary is still a democracy and Russia is not, ideological similarities between Prime Minister Orban and President Putin contribute to cordial relations to a certain extent: both leaders have been organizing their respective states in contrast to the “liberal, Western model,” with Orban naming Russia (along with Singapore, China, India, and Turkey) in a July 2014 speech as the type of state model likely to be successful in the future. In addition, Putin’s doctrine of “protecting” ethnic Russian populations that live outside the borders of Russia closely evokes the nationalist view in Hungary of ethnic Hungarian minorities that live outside the borders of the country. According to some Western observers, Hungary has played an unhelpful role in the Ukraine crisis by advocating greater autonomy for a region of western Ukraine inhabited by approximately 150,000 ethnic Hungarians. Breaking with European attempts to portray Russia as diplomatically isolated, Orban hosted Putin in a state visit in February 2015. Orban has been prime minister since 2010, and previously from 1998–2002, at the head of the conservative Fidesz party.

Hungary has considerable ties to Russia in the energy sector. Russia provides over 76% of the natural gas consumed in Hungary, accounting for one quarter of the country’s primary energy supply, and Hungary was a strong supporter of Gazprom’s now-cancelled South Stream pipeline that would have crossed Bulgaria, Serbia, Hungary, and Slovenia (bypassing Ukraine) to reach Austria and Italy. Russia also supplies the fuel for Hungary’s Paks nuclear power plant, which provides about 40% of the country’s electricity. Under a controversial deal reached in early 2014, Russia will loan Hungary €10 billion to finance the construction by Russia’s state-owned Rosatom of two new units at the Paks plant.

Although it joined its EU partners in condemning the annexation of Crimea as illegal, and signed on to the multiple rounds of sanctions imposed against Russia by the EU, Hungary has been among the countries most reluctant to impose sanctions in response to Russia’s actions in the Ukraine conflict. In an August 2014 interview, just two weeks after the adoption of expanded sectoral EU sanctions and one week after the announcement of retaliatory Russian measures against European food products, Prime Minister Orban called for a re-think of the EU’s sanctions, stating, “The sanctions policy pursued by the West, that is, ourselves, a necessary consequence of which has been what the Russians are doing, causes more harm to us than to Russia . . . In politics, this is called shooting oneself in the foot.” Although Russia is Hungary’s largest non-EU trading partner, with Hungarian exports to Russia represent less than 3% of Hungary’s total exports. The Hungarian economy is tied much more closely to the German economy.

Russia and European Far-Right Parties

In recent years, there has been an increasingly evident ideological link between European far-right parties and the leadership of Russia. Far-right parties in V4 countries that now take openly pro-Russia positions include: Jobbik in Hungary; the Slovak National Party (SNS) and People’s Party Our Slovakia (L’SNS); the Czech Workers’ Party of Social Justice (DSSS); Self-Defense of the

Republic of Poland (SRP) and Polish Falanga.

Elsewhere in Europe, pro-Russia positions are held by: France’s National Front (FN); Italy’s Lega Nord and the New Force party in Italy; the National Democratic Party of Germany (NPD); the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ); the Flemish Interest (VB) party in Belgium; the Order and Justice (TT) party in Lithuania; Golden Dawn in Greece; the Nationalist Party of Bulgaria (NPB) and Bulgaria’s Ataka Party; and the British National Party (BNP).

While many of these parties remain well on the fringes of their countries’ political scene, Jobbik, FPÖ, FN, Golden Dawn, Lega Nord and TT have had significant electoral successes in winning seats in national parliaments and the European Parliament.

Analysts assert that supporting far-right parties serves as a way for Russia to work against European unity. Among other elements of far-right ideology (typically including some combination of extreme nationalism, “law and order” and the preservation of “traditional” conservative or family values, and anti-immigrant, anti-Semitic, or anti-Islam sentiments), most of these parties tend to be anti-establishment and anti-EU. Some can be characterized as anti-NATO/U.S. or isolationist, and some focus on problems with neighboring countries. Jobbik, for example, in addition to promoting strongly anti-Roma, anti-Semitic, xenophobic, and anti-Western stances, promotes the idea that Slovakia and Romania are enemies of Hungary due to the ethnic Hungarian minorities living across the border in those countries.

Although direct evidence of Russian financial support for far-right parties remains for the most part difficult to identify, there is a widespread belief that Russia has covertly funneled money to parties such as the FN and Jobbik. In November 2014, news outlets reported the discovery that the FN had received a potentially illegal €9 million loan from a Russian bank with close ties to President Putin. Jobbik has also long been under suspicion of receiving Russian (and Iranian) money, and the party’s finances have been questioned in the Hungarian Parliament and investigated by the Hungarian government. After publishing an annual budget of approximately \$10,000 per year for 2004–2008, Jobbik ran a well-financed campaign in the 2009 European Parliament election and reportedly spent over \$100,000 in the 2010 national election, when it won nearly 16% of the vote. Analysts argued that the sudden increase in funding could not have been due to domestic contributions. As Jobbik began running a nationwide party operation, it also abandoned its previous anti-Russian rhetoric to advocate both good relations with Russia and Hungary leaving the EU to join Russia’s Eurasian Union. Jobbik now receives a state allowance allotted to parties in parliament and has an official budget of over \$2.3 million. Suspicions of additional private financing from abroad persist, however. A potentially key figure in Jobbik’s ties to Moscow is Bela Kovács, a Jobbik Member of the European Parliament who played a central role in the party’s rise in 2009 and has been a vocal supporter of Russia in the European Parliament. In October 2015, the European Parliament granted a request by the Hungarian government to lift Kovács’ immunity from arrest in order to face allegations of spying for Russia.

Russian support for far-right parties is not merely financial. The Russian government has also been proactive in offering organizational expertise, political know-how, and media assistance to parties on Europe’s far-right. Russian support has reportedly included establishing and coordinating pro-Russian parties, non-governmental civil or-

ganizations, and think tanks, and providing support to friendly media outlets. Russian diplomacy also offers far-right parties access to political networks, including by sponsoring forums and conferences that develop and coordinate national doctrines and policies and encourage the formation of party groups or families. To some extent, analysts attribute ties between a number of European far-right parties and parallels in the policies of parties in a range of countries to this type of Russian-sponsored network-building.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until noon today.

Accordingly (at 10 o’clock and 46 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker at noon.

PRAYER

Rabbi John Linder, Temple Solel, Paradise Valley, Arizona, offered the following prayer:

God of all people and all understanding, give us strength and reason during these perilous times; bring consolation to the bereaved in Belgium. Be with our public servants here as they represent these great United States.

Collectively, brothers and sisters, you are a tapestry of America, a beautiful quilt of diversity, the best of who we can be. Our respective faiths remind us that the measure of society is how we treat the most vulnerable: the orphan, the widow, the stranger in our midst.

God bless the Members of this House, their families and staff, and all those workers who humbly serve to care for and protect these hallowed Halls.

May these deliberations reflect the best of humanity, honoring the divine spark in one another. “Long may our land be bright, with freedom’s holy light,” as we continue to shine as a beacon of hope to those within our borders and around the world.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day’s proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. BUTTERFIELD) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.